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## ROBERT'S CAPITAL HIT.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

My mother-in-law and I were sitting in her best parlour—not that it was much to boast of, but she thought a great deal about it, and covered it up with anti-macassars to that extent, that nothing short of collecting them in a bundle, and burning them out of hand, would ever have got them effectually off my mind. We were not sitting in the best parlour for our own comfort, or because the windows opened upon a little garden, which, though dreadfully prim and formal, could not help being fragrant in that beautiful month of May, and which would have had the afternoon sun shining on it just now, in a perfectly delightful manner, but that my mother-in-law, in the interests of her drab and yellow Brussels carpet, had hastened to pull down the dark yellow holland blinds. We were not even sitting in the best parlour because we were expecting visitors. I should not have objected to that, for all our visitors entertained the best parlour superstition also; and we should have been 'despicable,' like Harvey Birch, if they had ever got a glimpse of our ordinary occupations, or seen any more lively literature about than Johnson's *Lives*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, Hannah More *passim*, and the county history. We were sitting in the best parlour for its good, not our pleasure or dignity—to air the room,' as my mother-in-law said. 'Fires are occasionally necessary, of course,' she would say; 'but they don't do altogether. People should always sit in their best parlour once a month or so, to take the chill off.' Whence she derived this notion, I do not know; but she entertained it, and stuck to it, and in the best parlour on this particular day we were sitting, 'to take the chill off.'

My mother-in-law was a good-looking woman for her age, which was fifty-five. She was tall, strongly built, and terribly healthy. She had a great deal of very heavy gray hair, which she wore in deep bands, like watch-pockets, upon her forehead; and she never deviated from one kind of cap, severe

in form, and laden with lustrous ribbon of a harsh dull shade of purple. She was always well dressed, in a certain tasteless fashion which she considered the only mode proper to women at her age, not to be departed from, without a compromise of propriety, not to say morality; and a more self-sufficient woman than my mother-in-law never existed. Women more ignorant, no doubt, there have been, and are; but I hope not many who prize and pet general ignorance as she did, and are so arrogantly vain of their possession of certain specialities of knowledge. I do not want to make her out at all more disagreeable than she was, or to deny her the good qualities which she possessed; nor am I 'down on her' for that generally conclusive and satisfactory reason that she *was* my mother-in-law. I speak quite fairly; and, indeed, I need not complain, for she liked me quite as well as she liked Robert. Robert was (and is) my husband, Robert Heron, of the firm of Shaw and Heron, solicitors, said by their friends to be 'rising' young men, but who certainly had not done anything remarkable as yet, in an upward direction.

'Though I say it who ought not,' is a customary deprecatory phrase when one member of a family praises another; but I never could see the meaning of it. Who is so likely to know the good that is in any individual as those nearest to him, and who see most of his life? Who, then, has the best right to announce the results of that contiguity and supervision? Society permits people's relatives to abuse them, does it not? It is not in the least shocked at that, is it? Very well, then, I am not going to be bullied and put down by society for praising my husband; and I maintain, on the contrary, that no one has so much right as I to declare that Robert was (and is) the best of men, and a very fine-looking one also. I do not see much change in him now. His beautiful blue eyes are not so bright, perhaps; but they are just as deep and as soft, and they have just the same look for me in them; and I don't think his being slightly bald is any defect at all. Every one admits that baldness is intellectual.

I distinctly remember a hairdresser, a really clever man, who knew at a glance that I never used pomatum, telling me it was caused by the activity of the brain. This was most true in Robert's case, I am sure. However, he really had almost too much hair at the time I am telling about—beautiful, dark brown, curly; and as it was not the fashion then to crop the hair until the skull shewed through in patches, and all the bumps asserted themselves unpleasantly, but it was worn rather long, I assure you he had quite a captivatingly sentimental look; and as he had rather low spirits naturally, many people suspected him of being poetical—I mean, of actually writing verses. But this was a mistake. He never did. Of course, he could have written beautiful poetry—if you could only know the things he has said to me in that very identical best parlour!—if he had liked, but he never did. I am wandering away from my mother-in-law all this time. I know I am apt to get tiresome when I begin to talk about Robert; but I will endeavour to avoid it. I will merely say that he was very good, and very handsome, and very clever; and that if any woman of my acquaintance says she has a better husband, I can afford to let her say it, for I don't believe her.

Robert and my mother-in-law did not get on together very well. Strange to say, he was not her favourite son; and John, who was always quite uninteresting to me, was. But John was a prosperous man, and remarkably like her in his ways and ideas; while Robert had not the knack of getting on rapidly, and did not in the least resemble her. He was considered to be a striking likeness of his father, the late Mr Heron, whom I believe to have been a thoroughly good and estimable man, but whose memory was not warmly cherished by his widow and her eldest son. He had not left them as much money as they expected. He had been rather unfortunate for some time before his death, and that was held to be a perfectly sufficient reason for that event being regarded with resignation. John was married to a woman with a large fortune (for people in our position), with an imperial nose, a mouth like a shark's, big feet, and *such* a temper! Robert used to say he would not have married Mary Anne Barton for a million of money. John, however, had done it much cheaper than that, and I really do not think he ever knew how disagreeable she was. He was afraid of her; and it was just as well. There are many men for whom it is very good that they should be afraid of their wives. John was one of them. But it was very singular that our joint mother-in-law was also afraid of 'Mrs John' (nobody ever called her Mary Anne), and was accustomed to speak of her as 'fine' as to her *physique*, and 'superior' as to her intellect. I did not mind. If Mrs John was a 'fine' woman, give me insignificance; if she was 'superior,' give me mediocrity. Robert was quite of my opinion, and Mrs John knew it. She had a mighty contempt for me; first, because I am small and pale, while she is of stately stature, and has the kind of complexion which people describe as 'a great deal of colour'; secondly, because I am of a contented disposition, and do not form any visions about Shaw and Heron attaining 'the top of the tree'; thirdly, because I am afraid of all servants; and, lastly, because I did not bring Robert more hundreds than she brought John thousands of

pounds. All very sound reasons for despising me, and I should not think of disputing them; but Mrs John imparted them to my mother-in-law, who adopted them, and that was not pleasant.

My mother-in-law lived at Clapham, and looked like it. I don't mean like the dwellers at the Clapham of the present, with its enormous railway 'junction,' with ever so many hundreds of trains a day running through it—no two authorities agree about the number—its unlimited resources of bewilderment for the unaccustomed traveller, its handsome shops, and its alarmingly Catholic features and institutions. I allude to the Clapham of the past, when the highly respectable chocolate-coloured omnibuses, which fared soberly to and from the *Plough Inn*, were the sole mode of conveyance for the vulgar; when the grave houses in their solemn gardens looked out upon the severe solitude of the common, and heavily laden wagons stopped on the other side, that the big lumpish horses might drink at ungainly wooden troughs, curiously inspected the while by cheerful vagrant dogs who had never heard of Mayne or muzzles. I speak of a time when you might as well have looked for a mosque as for a music-hall at Clapham, and when, judging by appearances, the higher branches of commerce in that suburb were confined to Berlin-wool and baskets; when Wilberforce was remembered as a local tradition, and there were green fields out Stockwell-way. It is not very long ago either, a much shorter time than any one would believe, who has not seen the wonderful changes which a few years have worked in London; but the Clapham people of that date had looks and ways peculiar to themselves, a grim respectability, a weekly-bill-paying-with-inflexible-regularity, and comfortable-investment-in-government-securities expression in their faces, raiment, and residences, which was exceedingly depressing to the outside world of strugglers, contemptible people, who did not always know the exact amount of their resources, and were sometimes uncomfortably uncertain about how they were to be 'realised.' Of the former class, though not 'in the very first line' of it, was my mother-in-law. She was not by any means a rich woman, even for a period which rated wealth by a much more moderate standard than that of the present; but she was 'well to do,' and she looked it. Security, not of the barrel-of-flour and cruse-of-oil order, but of that more satisfactory to the modern mind, which expresses itself by dividends, a happy absence of sympathy with anything so weak and stupid as anxiety and poverty, and the calm consciousness of being a good manager, were the characteristics which my mother-in-law's appearance impressed upon the observer.

I did not like Clapham, and I cannot assign a better reason for disliking it than that my mother-in-law lived there, and I had to live with her. If any of my readers think I could not *have* a better, I pity them. They too have suffered. The necessity for this family arrangement was a sore subject with us all, and especially with Robert, for it could by no means be denied that it had originated through his means. We had begun comfortably enough, much more so, our older and wiser friends told us, than was good for two young people, who had been so imprudent as to think so much of love and so little of money. It would vex me even now, when things are so different with us, that I

can smile at the recollection of Clapham, and its prim best-parlour gentility, to tell you about our own pretty little house at Hampstead, and all the small devices I had for its adornment, and how very happy we were in it for two whole years, though my mother-in-law always thought it extravagantly kept, and Mrs John used to sniff at the furniture, and look uncomfortably too large for the rooms.

Mind, I am not prepared to admit that it was a fault, but it certainly was a peculiarity of Robert's that he liked speculation. 'A little bit of a venture,' as he would call it, with a jocose persuasiveness which took all dangerous meaning out of the word, to my ears. Tales of the celerity with which fortunes had been made, every new method of making them quickly, had interest and attraction for him. I knew this arose from the vividness and versatility of his intelligence, but his mother called it a taste for gambling.

'It's a more decent way of gratifying it, my dear Martha,' she said once, when Robert had been just a little unlucky, 'than going to those horrible places which I have been told are defiantly called "hells" by the impious persons who frequent them; but it's quite as dangerous in the long run, as you will find out some day, when he has brought you to ruin with his coal mines and copper mines, and such-like nonsense.'

Well, he did not exactly bring me to ruin, but he brought me to something not very far from being as unpleasant—namely, to giving up our own house, and going to live with his mother. This was the only form in which she would help him; to have done so in any other, she would have held to be 'encouraging' him. It was not very easy to bear, I must say; but then to endure it with fortitude was the only way in which I could assist Robert out of the difficulty he had got into, and that was not much for me to do. He had to bear all the brunt of life; it would have ill become me to have objected to my share of the smaller worry, especially as it was my money which he had lost in that unlucky 'little bit of a venture'—happily, not quite all, but the greater part of it—a circumstance which I carefully concealed from my mother-in-law, but which Mrs John divined by dint of that 'superiority' of her intellect, which, so far as I have observed it, mainly exhibits itself in finding out things which people particularly wish to conceal. This divination led to much laudation of the superior wisdom of herself and her friends in the arrangement of her money matters, and exultation in the 'settling' of her fortune so securely on herself, that, as she plainly put it, 'if John were to turn into as great a fool as Robert to-morrow, she could not come to any harm.' And, indeed, I believe the settlements in question were so drawn up, that the deadliest suspicion and animosity might have been supposed, by observers, to have existed between the contracting parties. I was thankful that they said these things to me only, and I used to try and get over them before Robert came home from the City, and generally succeeded in keeping the small annoyances of the day pretty well out of his sight. He found out, however, soon after we went to Clapham, that I was looking rather pale and thin, and would have involved me in a great deal of trouble by making a fuss about it, only that I begged him to remember what a dislike his mother had to delicate

people, and how, whenever anybody was suspected of being nervous, she always recommended the administration of something which that unlucky individual especially disliked. So I prevailed on him to take no notice of my paleness and thinness, and promised to grow very fat and rosy in the autumn, when we hoped to be able to escape from Clapham, and get away on a little tour, but only of strictly Cockney dimensions, all by ourselves.

It was not a pleasant life, and there were such anxieties and efforts in it, that I look back to them now with a feeling of wonder at having lived through them so well, on the whole. But I had a little philosophy about me, and though I was not strong-minded or dogmatic in other respects, I had one fixed belief, to which I adhered practically. I held then, when I had a great many troubles, and I hold now, when I have comparatively few, that a woman who has married the man whom she loves, and respects with all her heart and conscience, and has never seen the least shadow on the brightness of their mutual love, is not to be pitied for any trouble or struggle which she may be called upon to bear. Every one must have his or her share of the heritage of sorrow; but the woman who is thoroughly, cloudlessly happy as a wife, and does not fully recognise and realise her supreme good fortune, even though it wear the form of unrelieved poverty, must be very ungrateful, and very foolish. I never entertained this belief more strongly than during our Clapham experiences, and, indeed, I found pretty constant occasion to recall my faith, and confirm myself in it.

One trial which recurred, not very frequently, but often enough to be irritating, was visiting Mrs John. She lived at Kingston-on-Thames, and, I am ashamed to say, I never could be brought to appreciate the beauty of the place. All the 'villas' had an offensively rich look to me: not that I was envious, but I always think when one is either normally poor, or in incidental difficulties, there is something depressing in the contemplation of comfortably secure, safely growing wealth. Robert could not understand my sentiments on this point, and found in those very 'villas' many proofs of the wisdom of 'ventures' little and great. This one had come by his villa and all it represented by mines, the other by railways, a third by steamers, a fourth was a well-known contractor, who did the most sporting things, and a fifth was the sharpest man going, and had done wonders on the Stock Exchange, through his happy facility of foreseeing 'what they were up to' in continental countries. But I did not like Kingston a bit the more for all that; and not one of the small efforts I had to make continuously, cost me so much as the visiting Mrs John's fine, cold, distressingly new house, where money and patent floorcloth seemed to be always palpably present, and where I never was permitted to forget that Robert had been 'so very imprudent' about that Grand Junction Canal business.

My mother-in-law and I invariably went on these formidable excursions in a heavy lop-sided brougham, which presented a mysterious appearance of having once been a carriage of another and a clumsier form, and having been inartistically compressed and otherwise altered. It had very narrow windows, and slanting cushions, and doors which it was exceedingly difficult to open, and next to impossible to shut. It was drawn by a

heavy, ugly, lop-sided horse, with a bare patch on one of his sides; and the driver was the most ill-tempered man I ever saw in my life, even on a coach-box. This vehicle was an object of extreme aversion to me, chiefly, however, because John paid for the use which we made of it, and no doubt made a very cheap bargain with Mr Thompson, the livery-stable keeper. How I used to enjoy my omnibus drives with Robert, when I went into the City to do a little shopping, and when he would become quite animated in describing the kind of carriage he fully intended to keep for me, when one or two little things he had in view should have 'turned up trumps!' Robert mixed his metaphors sometimes, it must be confessed, and I did not like to hear him use any expression connected with gambling. It almost sounded as if my mother-in-law might possibly be right. Next to the visits to Mrs John, I placed our best-parlour days in the category of small inflictions. Whether it was the varnish, the anti-macassars, the influence of art, as exemplified in six awful pictures pervaded by a cerulean tinge, and misrepresenting the bay and city of Naples, or the dreary literature which described a kind of cart-wheel pattern on the shiny, inlaid round table, that inspired my mother-in-law to be preternaturally unpleasant on such occasions, or whether it was her self-enforced abstinence from reading the newspaper and mending her stockings (neither occupation being considered suitable to the dignity of the best parlour), I cannot say. The fact was so; and when she aired her best parlour, I aired my best resolutions.

It was afternoon, and I had got on very well so far. I had brought no unbound books, and none but 'company' work into the best parlour. I had sat contentedly bolt upright upon an uncomfortable chair, so as to avoid crushing the clean anti-macassar; I had abstained from the use of a footstool adorned gorgeously with a blue worsted parrot, for a similar reason. I had in every respect been as conciliatory as possible; but the time had appeared unusually long, and the moment at which I might put on my bonnet and go to the *Plough Inn* to meet Robert—a pleasure I enjoyed every day and in all weathers—seemed unattainably far off.

I think there is a great deal of varied eloquence in sniffs. The derisive, the contemptuous, the incredulous, the condemnatory, the deprecatory, and the warning sniff, must be familiar, and, I should suppose, aggravating to every one. I never knew such a proficient in the practice of the sniff, in all its varieties, as my mother-in-law; and she had contrived, on this occasion, to run through the whole sniff gamut, until really I felt so nervous and so cross I hardly knew how to bear it. The postman's knock was quite a relief; though my mother-in-law was not a pleasant person about letters, requiring to see at least the outside of every one which came to the house, and putting on an expression, more or less meek, according to her mood, of being aggrieved, when she was not made acquainted with their contents. Two letters were brought in, handed to her, and duly inspected by her, and then she pushed one over to me. It was from my sister, who was very chatty and confidential with me about everything, especially about a love-affair of the most imprudent and unpromising kind,

being an engagement between herself and a lieutenant of marines, with nothing but his pay at present, and no reasonable expectations for the future. Nevertheless, I was much interested in this charming idyllic affair, and believed that a little poverty would do Gerty no more harm than it had done me; but I was not at all desirous of introducing the subject to the notice of my mother-in-law. She did not like my family; she included them all under the opprobrious denomination 'worldlings;' and some people being kind enough to think Gerty and myself rather pretty, she objected to that opinion, declaring that we were not her 'style.' A glance at Gerty's letter shewed me it was a long one, so I looked over the first page, and then put it away in my pocket; a proceeding observed and resented by my mother-in-law, who performed a sniff of a novel and wholly exasperating kind, and took up the second letter with a contemptuous smile. 'For Robert, I see,' she observed; 'and very like a prospectus. No doubt it is one. Some mine in the moon, a railway at the bottom of the sea, in which he will do well to invest his large amount of floating capital. Be sure you give it to him, my dear; it would be a pity to deprive him of an opportunity for indulging his taste and improving his circumstances.'

My mother-in-law was epigrammatical at times, but only under the influence of spite.

Much nettled by this speech, I broke open the letter in question, a proceeding which produced another sniff of the same kind as before. 'Any letters addressed to Robert *here*, I have his leave to open,' I said.

'Oh, indeed.'

The horrid thing *was* a prospectus; or, perhaps, I should rather say it was a scheme for the formation of a company to work a gold mine in Brazil, situated in the richest district of the gold-bearing country, and which could be purchased, owing to peculiar circumstances, on surprisingly advantageous terms. This communication was not printed or lithographed, but written, in a very plain clerk-like hand, and was headed 'Private and Confidential.' But I did not think anything of that; lots of things had come to Robert with a similar injunction, which could have no other meaning than that they were to be as public and as little confidential as possible. I gave the open sheet of paper into my mother-in-law's hand, and she eyed it curiously.

'So it *is* a prospectus,' she said; 'I thought so. Robert must be pretty well known to have a taste for ruining himself and other people, or they would not be giving him notice of the villainies that are on hand in that place.' She always spoke of the City as if it were one vast recognised den of thieves.

'He has not been very fortunate himself,' I ventured to observe; 'but I don't think Robert has ever injured any other person by his speculations.'

'I don't know, I'm sure; but I don't hold with speculation—I never did. I can't understand why people shouldn't be content with their own proper business and their lawful gains. Gold mines indeed! Can't they let the places be, in those distant countries, as God Almighty made them. There's been more robbing and murdering since those "diggings" and mines came up, than there ever was in my time before them, I can tell you.'

This was a view of the subject with which I could not contend, so I said nothing.

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My mother-in-law continued: 'And as to getting any good out of speculations without doing other people harm, I don't believe a word of it. All the profits which go into one set of pockets *must* come out of another set, you know; there's no getting over that, you know; and for my part, I don't consider it honest.'

I felt uncomfortable, though I confess I had generally little respect for my mother-in-law's opinions, and less for her reasons; but I had said something not unlike this to Robert on one occasion myself, and he had taken, somewhat ineffectually, a good deal of trouble to make me understand that there are speculations, and speculations; some to which the argument, that one could gain only by another's loss, applies but too clearly, and others by which all concerned may make legitimate profit, as, for instance, in this very case of a gold mine. I did try to plead the difference, but in vain; I produced no effect upon my mother-in-law beyond inducing her to declare, more emphatically than before, that she 'did not hold with speculations,' and that they were 'all villainy together.' She concluded by prophesying that Robert would never stop until he had brought himself and me to the workhouse, and that then he would be satisfied. Which seemed improbable.

It was not Robert's time yet; but I was so tired, this best-parlour day had been so more than usually trying, that I pretended to mistake the hour, and set off to meet my husband. After a long desultory stroll, I saw the familiar chocolate-coloured omnibus nearing the *Plough*, and stood still at the corner as usual, while Robert descended from the sober vehicle, and joined me. Robert has a very sweet and sensible expression of countenance, but it is not gay—no, certainly not gay—mildly cheerful, perhaps, which I like (how I detest a simper or a grin, the usual expression of people 'blessed with high spirits!'); but to-day, he had a decided smile in his eyes and on his lips, as he tucked my arm under his, and walked away with me.

'Martha, my darling!' said he, 'I have a bit of good news for you.'

'Have you, Robert?' said I. 'What is it about?'

'It is about a gold mine,' replied my husband.

### WESTWARD HO!—TO THE PACIFIC.

THE last sleeper is laid, the last rail spiked down, of the railway which the Americans have completed across the whole breadth of the United States' dominion.

Let us understand the full significance of this announcement. The railway-makers on the other side of the Atlantic tell us that, before many months have passed, we Britishers will be travelling through their country to get to the vast Pacific Ocean—that we shall abjure Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope, the Isthmus of Suez and the Isthmus of Panama, and take the overland route across America to California, whence steamers will conduct the trade to Japan, China, New Zealand, and Australia. But there are reasons for thinking that our Trans-Atlantic cousins somewhat misinterpret this matter. That the trade of New York, Boston, and the other Atlantic cities of the Union will largely take this route, is probable enough, especially as considerable success has attended the establishment of lines of steamers from San Francisco

across the Pacific to eastern Asia; but the conditions of the problem are different when we are treating of Europe. Even if we allow only ten days to cross the Atlantic from Liverpool to New York, and six days to cross America from New York to San Francisco, there would be no gain over our P. and O. route from England to China. The time would be almost exactly the same to Shanghai (forty-three days); it would be eight days more to Hong-kong (forty-seven days against thirty-nine); and ten days less to Yokohama in Japan (thirty-eight days against forty-eight). Further south, an examination of the map and the time-tables tells us that, while the new route will be shorter than the old to New Zealand, it will be longer to Australia, and so much longer to India as to place competition altogether out of the question.

Nevertheless, the Atlantic and Pacific Railway is a great and grand thing, for which the Americans justly deserve the credit which they claim. As soon as the Mexican war had placed the Washington government in possession of Texas, New Mexico, and California (somewhat more than twenty years ago), a railway across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific began to be talked about. It was known that the Rocky Mountains would have to be crossed at some point or other; it was known that the total length of line would have to be measured by thousands rather than hundreds of miles; and therefore the undertaking would necessarily be vast in relation both to cost and to engineering. Almost immediately afterwards, gold was discovered in California, and this discovery naturally increased the desire to establish good road-communication between the states of the Union east and west of the Rocky Mountains. No wonder that it has taken twenty years to achieve this result, considering the manifold difficulties that surrounded it.

In 1853, Congress empowered the government to take this matter in hand. The first task was to make explorations and surveys, as a means of determining in what latitude the mountain-range should be crossed. The United States' possessions, in this longitude of the American continent, extend north and south from latitude thirty degrees to latitude forty-nine degrees—about thirteen hundred miles in a straight line; and therefore ample scope was afforded in selecting the line of route. These explorations and surveys were continued until 1857, and the results embodied in many bulky volumes presented to Congress. One result of the examination was, to shew that the Rocky Mountains are in many places flanked by easier slopes than had before been supposed, and are crossed by many passes of comparatively small altitude. Six routes especially were reported on: 1. From the Red River in Eastern Texas to somewhat low down in California, crossing the Rocky Mountains about latitude thirty-five degrees. 2. From Port Smith on the Arkansas to St Pedro on the Pacific, crossing in latitude thirty-five degrees. 3. Crossing the range about the latitude just named, but beginning at Kansas City on the Missouri, and ending at San Francisco. 4. From Kansas City due west to the mountains, which would be crossed about latitude thirty-eight degrees. 5. From Omaha or Council Bluffs to San Francisco, crossing at latitude forty-two degrees. 6. From the extreme waters of the Mississippi, near Lake Superior, crossing the Rocky

Mountains about latitude forty-seven degrees, and so to Columbia River and Puget Sound. At first, the Washington government leaned towards the southernmost of these six routes; but political and engineering considerations gradually drew attention towards other quarters. About the time of the breaking out of the Civil War, railways were already finished from New York and Boston to Chicago, and from Philadelphia and Washington to St Louis (at the junction of the Missouri with the Mississippi); and hence arose a struggle between the great cities whether Chicago or St Louis should be the starting-point of the Pacific Railway. Chicago carried the day, the line to pass through Nebraska Territory instead of Kansas, and to be constructed by two distinct companies—the Union Pacific eastward of the Rocky Mountains, and the Central Pacific thence westward to California. It is the opinion of many Americans that the Kansas line would have passed through a more fertile country, and would have been more central; indeed, our go-ahead cousins already say that *one* railway from ocean to ocean will not satisfy their wants.

The government aid to the Pacific Railway is very important. In the first place, a right of way is given through the several states and territories, free of cost. In the second place, a most valuable strip of land is *given* to the companies, one mile in width along the whole length of the railway, amounting to twelve thousand eight hundred acres per mile run: available for cultivation, building, manufactures, or any other purposes for which it may be suitable. In the third place, the companies may use, for the construction of their lines, any coal, timber, or iron that may be met with on the way. And in the fourth place, loans are made by the state of half the capital required, at a certain rate of interest—the whole to be repaid in the course of thirty years. In return for these great items of assistance, the government requires that the railway and telegraph lines shall be kept in good order; that government dispatches and munitions of war shall have preference of transmission, if required; that the government shall pay for such services by cancelling an equivalent amount of loan, instead of in cash; and that the companies shall lay by a sinking fund each year out of their net receipts, to wipe off gradually the rest of the debt.

This grand undertaking is now virtually finished. There are eleven hundred miles on the east of the Rocky Mountains, and seven hundred on the west—all this beyond Omaha, which is itself many hundred miles beyond the Mississippi. The available capital is about one hundred and fifty million dollars, equal to thirty million pounds; but the line has not cost nearly so much, there being a considerable surplus applicable to the construction of branches and other works. From Omaha the line runs along the Platte Valley in Nebraska Territory; it ascends to the dividing ridge by easy gradients, but the country traversed is rather wild and sterile; the ridge is crossed at an elevation of 8262 feet above the sea-level, and then the Laramie Plains are entered, a kind of upland plateau. These plains have the Sweet Water gold-diggings on the north, and those of Colorado on the south—a position which promises a great future for the railway in these regions. Mr W. A. Bell, who has visited the whole district, says on this point: 'The

miners, whose wants are very great, require all the necessities and such of the luxuries of life as they seek to be carried to them by rail. A non-producing population, say, of a thousand miners, as well on account of their migratory habits as their many requirements, is a larger source of revenue to a railroad than six times the population depending upon agriculture—even if we disregard altogether the transportation of ores, an item often of the greatest importance.' Beyond the Rocky Mountains, the line traverses two hundred miles of rather desolate country, through Bitter Creek and Green River. Then comes the Wahsatch belt of mountains, after which it enters the basin of Great Salt Lake. The railway does not go nearer than thirty miles to the celebrated city of the Mormons; but we may rely upon those enterprising people obtaining a branch-line as soon as it suits their purpose. Next comes a region in which silver mines are being discovered more and more every year; then the Sierra Nevada; and then a continuous descent to the Pacific at San Francisco. This last is the most difficult part of the line; for the engineers had to manage about seven thousand feet of descent in little more than one hundred miles.

Mr Bell gives an amusing account, by an American writer, of the energetic way in which these works have been carried on. 'The whole organisation of the force engaged in the construction of the railway is military. The men who go ahead, locating the road, are the advanced guard. Following these is the second line, cutting through the gorges, grading the road, and building bridges. Then comes the main line of the army, placing the sleepers, laying the track, spiking down the rails, perfecting the alignment, ballasting the road, and dressing up and completing for immediate use.' Never before was known such a rattling mode of laying down a railway as was adopted in the Salt Lake and Humboldt basins, during the latter part of 1868 and the beginning of 1869. 'A light car, drawn by a single horse, gallops up to the front with its load of rails. Two men seize the end of a rail and start forward, the rest of the gang taking hold by twos, until it is clear of the car. They come forward at a run. At the word of command, the rail is dropped in its place, right side up, with care, while the same process goes on at the other side of the car. Less than thirty seconds to a rail for each gang, and so four rails go down to the minute. The moment the car is empty, it is tipped over on the side of the track, to let the next loaded car pass it, and then it is tipped back again, and sent back flying for another load. Close behind the first gang come the gaugers, spikers, and bolters; and a lively time they make of it. It is a grand anvil chorus that those sturdy sledges are playing across the plain; it is in triple time, three strokes to a spike. There are ten spikes to a rail, four hundred rails to a mile, eighteen hundred miles to San Francisco.' In this way the writer arrives at a calculation that more than twenty-one million blows with sledge-hammers will have been given to the spikes which fasten down the rails of the Great Pacific Railway. Most of these blows, in the section westward of the Rocky Mountains, have been given by Chinamen, who were engaged ten thousand at a time by the energetic Californians.

An important question for England and her

colonies is: How will these vast American railways affect us? The Chicago and Salt Lake line is open, or nearly so; the Kansas line is being pushed on so rapidly from St Louis towards the Rocky Mountains, that there is a fair chance of our seeing a South Pacific as well as a Central Pacific Railway. But besides these, the Americans are looking with longing eyes towards a North Pacific line, running throughout its whole length almost close to the British boundary, and through a very fertile country. We lately noticed the expected transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories to Canada; and now the question arises about this north route to the Pacific. We fear that the slowness of colonial proceedings will leave us far in arrear of Yankee go-aheadism. We have to settle whether the Hudson's Bay Company's territories will really pass into the hands of Canada; then, whether the other confederated colonies will work heartily with Canada in any schemes for developing the vast region; then, whether Vancouver and British Columbia can be prevented from falling into the power of the United States; and lastly, whether the capital necessary for new railways, canals, and roads is to be provided by the imperial government, by the colonial governments, or by joint-stock companies. Unquestionably, much time will pass before all these preliminaries are disposed of; and there can hardly be a doubt that the Americans will try to get any new route in that region to pass through their own territory instead of ours, if possible. That the Fertile Belt is in our part of America, and that it would form an admirable route of travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is admitted; but, it is not impossible that we may wake up some fine day and find our American cousins seizing the Fertile Belt itself, on some pretext or other, and beginning the railway which we have supinely neglected. This Fertile Belt lies between Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains, and is watered by Red River, the Assiniboine, the Saskatchewan, and several beautiful lakes, the chief of which are the Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake, and Lake Winnipeg. At present, the Belt is cut off from easy access by a stony region; but a road of two hundred miles would obviate this difficulty, and then the Belt itself would be easily traversed either by road or railway. So remarkably do the rivers and lakes connect themselves with the great lakes of Canada, that there is water-communication from the mouth of the St Lawrence to the remote end of Lake Superior, and from the Lake of the Woods to within a hundred and fifty miles of the Rocky Mountains. The gap between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods is the two hundred miles of distance above mentioned. There are a few rapids and shoals, it is true, but these might be so far improved as to be no interruption to navigation. The Belt, containing something like a hundred thousand square miles of rich fertile land, leads almost in a straight line to the Leather Head Pass, one of the lowest and most easily accessible in the whole range of the Rocky Mountains. Those who have read Lord Milton and Mr Cheadle's volume will remember their description of this pass; the ascent was so easy that the travellers did not know they had reached the top until they noticed that the streams flowed towards the west. But a water-communication by means of the rivers and lakes would not alone suffice. What is

wanted to place British America on anything like a par with the United States, would be a railway extending from Canada to British Columbia, through the Fertile Belt, and over the easy pass of the Rocky Mountains. It has now been clearly ascertained that this route is peculiarly well fitted for a railway, both on account of its easy gradients and of the facility for supporting and employing a large and busy population. Once let such a railway be formed, and not only would there be this busy hive of industry gradually collected under the British crown, but there would be a new mail and commercial route established across the Pacific to China and Japan, from the magnificent harbour of Esquimaux in British Columbia. It sounds formidable to talk of a travel-route across a continent three thousand miles wide (which is about the distance from the Atlantic to the Pacific in these parts); but there is already magnificent steam-communication on the St Lawrence and the great lakes, leaving a comparatively easy country beyond to be 'exploited' by the railway engineers. There is not, in the whole range of British enterprise, a present scheme more worthy of attention than this. Almost every inducement, political and commercial, tends that way; and it will be a great shame to us and our American colonists if the citizens of the United States should be allowed to absorb all the routes from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

#### EDMUND KEAN.

THE transitoriness of fame is one of the best worn subjects on which human tongues and pens have ever been engaged. The ultra-transitoriness of the fame of the actor is an especially well-worn section of that subject, and yet there are few pleasanter or more popular books than the biographies of the great players of a period which we are never tired of contrasting with our own, in certain aspects, to the disadvantage of the latter. Under the Protean masks of the actor, we like to see the man; and perhaps for the very reason that his achievements are ephemeral, because to him death means annihilation as an artist, we have great curiosity about him, as he lived and was, off the stage.

Biographies of every sort are generally written by partisans; biographies of actors are commonly written by enthusiasts, and Mr Hawkins's *Life of Edmund Kean*\* is no exception to this rule. But it is all the pleasanter reading for that, carrying one along with quite a gleeful sense of the thorough good will, the ardent belief, the passionate admiration of the writer. One can understand that the task of writing the life of Edmund Kean must have been full of pain; that the contrast between the intellectual and the moral nature of the great tragedian must have been constantly present; and that the effort to exhibit his genius in its full grandeur and brilliancy must have been very hard to maintain in the inexorable presence of his hopeless and many-sided perversity. Happily, the effort is well sustained; and though it is not possible to forget how bad a man Kean was, Mr Hawkins forces us to realise, much more fully, his greatness as an actor.

\* *The Life of Edmund Kean, from published and original Sources.* By F. W. Hawkins. London: Tinsley Brothers.

Fate and fortune were terribly against the clever, unruly boy, with an 'Italian' face, and dauntlessly vagabond propensities, who inherited some 'good' blood, but whose birth was illegitimate, and whose maternal ancestors were remarkable for their misfortunes. George Saville Carey, his grandfather, struggled all his life long with poverty, and played many motley parts upon the stage of life. He never gained more than a bare subsistence, and was indebted to charity for a decent funeral. Henry Carey, his great-grandfather, was a lyrical and dramatic writer of some reputation—he is the reputed author of the *National Anthem*; but he was always in difficulties, and constitutionally melancholy—a combination which led to his committing suicide.

Edmund Kean's mother seems to have been as worthless a specimen of her sex as ever lived to bring disgrace on a son, to whom she was always an unnatural parent, and whose hard-earned prosperity was considerably marred by her 'turning up.' The conduct of this wretched person was such as to suggest the doubt whether Edmund Kean really was her son, and the suspicion that to Miss Tidswell, who gave him food, shelter, and some measure of affection, that title, so unlikely ever to prove a distinction, really belonged. Anne Carey was as bad as a daughter as she was as a mother. She ran away from home at fifteen to join a company of strolling players, and in the intervals of business figured as a hawker in the streets of London. Here Aaron Kean, an architect, saw her, and took her under his protection, but abandoned her after the birth of her son, who came into the world under most unfavourable circumstances in every respect, on the 4th November 1787, in a lodging-house in Chancery Lane. His mother took care of him until he was three months old, and then left him to the mercy of anybody who might exercise that virtue in his favour, which some one did for two years, of which there is no record. One November night in 1789, a poor man and his wife found the little child in a doorway, cold, starving, and forsaken, and took him home with them. His mother came shortly, and demanded her 'property'; and then the drama of Edmund Kean's life began, a drama as strange and wild, as full of human passion and misery as any he ever played in later, and shook men's nerves, and wrung their hearts by his rendering of its emotions.

He was a beautiful child, with graceful limbs and fine black eyes, destined afterwards to emulate the 'wonderful eyes' of 'little Davy'; and at three years old he lay at the feet of Sylvia and Cymon, as Cupid, in a ballet by Noverre, at Drury Lane. Then he was placed in the hands of a posture-master, to be tortured into pantomimic possibilities, but the beautiful child was too young, too delicate, and the graceful limbs were distorted, so that they had to be placed in iron supports. Their symmetry was restored; but Edmund Kean's shortness of stature was caused, says Mr Hawkins, 'by his mother's persistence that he should continue his work at the theatre, the irons being at the same time attached to his body.' He was totally ignorant, until a few decent people, attracted by his beauty and intelligence, subscribed to send him to a little school in Chapel Street, Soho. But the spirit of restlessness and insubordination was rising in him now, and when less than eight years

old, he told his mother he meant to go to sea, whereupon she beat him lustily. This decided him; and the tiny child, with a bundle and a stick, set out—the original of David Copperfield—to walk to Portsmouth. He did it, though, encountering no Aunt Betsy, and shipped himself as a cabin-boy for Madeira. What a story to be compressed into eight years! Edmund Kean was forty-six years old at his death, but can he be said to have died young? The story of his childhood and boyhood is too terrible, too degrading, too much charged with poverty and struggle, with every depressing influence, and above all, with close contact with all that is hard, base, and unfeeling in human nature, to permit one to think of him as a young man at all. In this childish adventure there was a wonderful indication of the character and the future of its hero. One shrinks from the picture of the suffering, lonely, over-taxed child, all unused to pity, yet raging in his pain, and driven to the most desperate resort of deception and preternatural cunning which surely ever presented itself to the tender years of childhood. There is something acutely painful in the wonderful fear and pain-taught cunning which enabled Edmund Kean to assume deafness and lameness so perfectly as to deceive his captain and the whole ship's crew for two months, and in the amazing strength of will and nerve which gave a child not yet nine years old the power of so controlling his emotions as to remain apparently deaf to the tremendous noise of a tempest in which the ship was all but lost. There is also something demon-like in the following picture, in a few lines: 'Arrived on shore, he tendered his gratitude to those who carried him from the ship by a sudden and vigorous execution of the College hornpipe, and disappeared among the ramifications of Portsmouth before his custodians recovered from the stupefying amazement with which they beheld this extraordinary transformation.'

The child tramped back to London, to find himself homeless and destitute, his mother having gone off on her wanderings again; and he knocked, as a desperate venture, at the door of his uncle, Moses Kean, mimic, ventriloquist, and general 'entertainer.' This queer person, not at all a bad fellow in his way, received his prematurely scampish little nephew kindly, and introduced him to his own humble by-paths of dramatic art, and then to Shakspeare, as performed at Drury Lane. Moses Kean, his uncle, Mrs Price, his mother's sister, and Miss Tidswell the actress were his friends, patrons, and the arbiters of his destiny. They sent him to a day-school, and in the evenings 'Tid' taught him the mechanical principles of the actor's art, D'Egville taught him stage-dancing, and Angelo made him 'cunning of fence.' From Incedon he learned to sing, and nature had gifted him with ear, taste, and voice. He was very clever, very quick, very industrious in a fitful way, but wild, mischievous, and ungovernable; and he displayed terribly soon that inclination for dissipation, which afterwards made his career such a painful story to contemplate, and turned all his greatness to a mockery and a shame. At this period of his life, the future Lear, Hamlet, Richard, Othello, was in the constant habit of running away from his friends, performing acrobatic antics for halfpence in the streets and at public-houses, and was, on one occasion, actually found by Miss



Tidswell tarred and feathered in St George's Fields, and dragged home by her, by a rope fastened round his waist. They locked him up, but he escaped, at the risk of his neck. They soldered a brass collar round his neck, with the inscription: 'This boy belongs to 9 Lisle Street, Leicester Square. Please bring him home;' but he tied a handkerchief round the collar, and was free. At length he got an engagement to play child's parts at Drury Lane; and as Arthur, when John Kemble played King John to the Constance of Mrs Siddons, was uproariously applauded. What a long, dreary, heart-sickening interval and struggle lay between the success of the child-actor and the splendid triumph of the young man, almost done to death by failure, by want, by heart-sickness and misery, who was to achieve such a reputation upon that very stage, when hope had been so long deferred that he said: 'If I succeed, I shall go mad!'

When his uncle died, and he was thrown entirely on the bounty of Miss Tidswell, he abandoned his acrobatic pursuits, and took to serious study of Shakespeare, especially *Richard III.*, and conceived some notion of his own wonderful powers, together with the lofty and novel ambition to restore fidelity to nature to the stage. Then comes the episode to which Mr Hawkins, with pardonable special pleading, attributes the sharp, sudden, and very decided turn towards evil of the boy's character. He was warmly 'taken up' by Mr and Mrs Clarke, wealthy people, at whose house he gave recitations, and enjoyed decent society, and the delightful sense of being appreciated. A paradise opened its gates to him awhile, the neglected child was cared for, the struggling genius developed. Mrs Clarke instructed him in various branches of literature, and he taught himself to play upon the pianoforte, to compose music, and construct little plays. His manners became gentle, his natural tastes developed. Had this care, this comfort, this training lasted, Edmund Kean might have been a very different man. But they did not last, and the end of them came thus: 'Some visitors at the house at Guildford Street were arranging to go to the theatre, and on Edmund's name being included in the list of the playgoers, a gentleman inquired—"What! Does he sit in the box with us?" "Certainly," was the reply. The doubt implied in the question was too much for the sensitive boy. He rushed out of the house, and it was not until three weeks after, that he was found asleep on a dust-heap, near Mrs Clarke's house, ragged, squalid, and footsore. He stated that he had tramped to Bristol, with the intention of shipping himself to America; but that, as none of the seafaring men would take him, in consequence of his apparent weakness, he bent his steps back again to London, and, after enduring every variety of wretchedness on the way, he had fallen exhausted on the spot where they had found him. Mrs Clarke's interest in the player-boy ceased, and a benefit having been made up in order that his departure might not wear a look of dismissal, he was again thrown on the charity of Miss Tidswell. It is evident from this incident that Edmund Kean had a bad temper, and was entirely wanting in reasonableness; and dispassionate readers will not blame Mrs Clarke very strongly for losing her interest in the player-boy, who acted towards her like an ungrateful lunatic, because he had received an affront with which she had nothing to do. They

will also find it difficult to discern in Kean that 'inherent gentleness of disposition' which Mr Hawkins assigns to him, and which he says 'had aroused him to a consciousness of the superiority of the new life over the old one, so that, finding his cherished hopes of permanently clearing himself from all trace of his former associations were destroyed, that he was again reduced to the level of a street Arab, and that he should be forced to mingle again with the lowest of the low, he became filled with bitterness, which eventually resolved itself into an implacable aversion to rank, wealth, and refinement.' This is a strictly one-sided view. It was not so much what Edmund Kean hated, as what he loved, which was deplorable.

The Shakespearian prodigy became a tumbler at Bartholomew Fair, giving imitations of a monkey and a nightingale; climbing, like a squirrel, a ladder balanced on a man's chin, sliding down to the ground, and gliding away in wonderful mimicry of a snake; playing Tom Thumb to a strolling Queen Dollalolla; performing startling equestrian feats in the ring, in the course of which he broke both his legs; undergoing every conceivable kind of drudgery, and being mixed up with the very dregs of society. We follow him back to Lisle Street after this escapade, and find him studying Shakespeare under Miss Tidswell's superintendence, and startling everybody by his originality; then rushing off to Portsmouth, on the strength of a report of his mother's being there, without any money beyond his bare subsistence on the journey. Ann Carey was not at Portsmouth, and the boy had apparently no resource but begging his way back to town. He would not beg, however, and this was what he did. 'At fourteen years of age, and with nothing but his good looks to recommend him, he hired, on credit, a room in one of the Portsmouth inns, for the purpose of giving an entertainment; and in a performance consisting of selections from *Hamlet*, *Richard III.*, and *Jane Shore*, interspersed with a series of acrobatic evolutions and some exquisite singing, he achieved such a success that it was repeated on the next day; and after paying expenses, found himself in possession of three pounds.' This delightful earnest of future success determined his career; and he studied and worked with a desperate perseverance which is one of the most interesting traits in his character. He recites Rollo's address to the Peruvians; gets an engagement to play leading parts at the York theatre for twenty nights; and astonishes 'Tid' by his entirely original and subtle conception of the character of Shylock—audaciously setting at naught the great Kemble and Cooke traditions. With his engagement at York, his life as a strolling player began. He soon joined Richardson's troupe, and found his mother, who improved the sentimental occasion by inducing him to carry her pack of pomatums, hair-brushes, and other hawkers' goods for her, and help her to sell them. She also proposed that he should hand over all his earnings to her. But he would not submit to this: a quarrel ensued; he gave Miss Carey a sketch of his opinion of her, and she dismissed him with an emphatic curse! What an episode in a young man's life! It may truly be said he had few chances for good allotted to him.

His success as a stroller was immediate. Richardson discovered that he had picked up an 'extraordinary genius;' the boy was commanded to

Windsor, to give his 'recitations' before the king, and amply justified the expectation entertained. Within a week, he was withdrawn from Richardson's company, and a mysterious period of his life began. Mr Hawkins maintains that Edmund Kean was educated at Eton, which is denied by Mr Procter and Mr Leman Rede, and of which there is no reliable testimony, unless the great tragedian's very indifferent Latin and equally defective English composition (he had an extraordinary fancy for introducing bad Latin on all occasions) be accepted by cynics as more than presumptive evidence. The point is not important now; but it may be supposed that he could not have been placed at Eton by Miss Tidswell; and if not, who was to do it? The boy was friendless except for her, and moneyless except for his small salary. Trustworthy information turns up in his eighteenth year, when we find him playing, at Dumfries, low comedian in Moss's company; anon at Northallerton, then at Gloucester; in short, going the ordinary rounds of a strolling player, but manifesting genius, originality, and versatility so extraordinary as to be often bewildering to his audiences. His talent was of the most brilliant and attractive description, but it would be difficult to imagine any temper more repulsive. There is an element of savagery, of moody, brute-like ferocity in many of the anecdotes of Kean at this time, when his great powers were maturing, and his perceptive faculties were being brought, by constant use, to the perfection of skill, quickness, and accuracy. He mastered every subtlety of human expression, every indication, intonation, gesture of human passion in this period of insignificance, and never lost faith in the coming of the time when he should reveal himself as the master of his art, the greatest interpreter to men of the greatest genius among mankind. 'He studied and slaved,' his wife said afterwards, 'beyond any actor I ever knew.'

In his twentieth year, he married Miss Chambers, an actress, but of respectable family, then in her twenty-ninth year, and was dismissed by Manager Beverley, on the pretext that the attraction of Kean, little as it was, would wane when it was discovered that he was no longer an unmarried tragedian, and that the lady was a mere encumbrance. Then began a life of terrible suffering, privation, and disappointment, destined to last six years. The story is a miserable one in every aspect—the pair were in abject poverty always, in actual want frequently. But Edmund Kean was determined to win; his resolution, his courage never flagged, his intense study was never relaxed; and though he was addicted to drinking from his boyhood, the vice did not hinder him. A curious instance of his sound judgment is given in the fact that, when playing at Birmingham, at a salary of a guinea a week, he refused Stephen Kemble's offer of an engagement in London, replying that his powers had not yet arrived at maturity, and that it would not do to perfect himself beneath the critical eye of a London audience. Here is one story of this terrible time. 'At four o'clock one July morning, Kean set out from Birmingham, having closed with an offer from Manager Cherry of Swansea. Two hundred miles to be travelled over on foot, and Mrs Kean likely to become a mother before the journey is half accomplished. Kean would fain have left her in Birmingham, but

there was a furious pack of unsatisfied creditors in that town, and the unfortunate lady was compelled to accompany her husband. Travelling twelve miles a day, and eking out their scanty funds by giving recitations in gentlemen's houses, they arrived in a fortnight at Bristol, and crossed in a boat to Newport. Passing through Cardiff, Cowbridge, and other towns, they eventually reached Swansea, where they obtained a little tiled parlour and bedroom for eight shillings a week. Here their first son, Howard, was born; and here Mrs Kean underwent, no doubt, much suffering of many kinds, for her husband was reduced to playing secondary characters, his temper was furious, and he was habitually what Mr Hawkins, with the tender euphemism of a biographer, calls 'unsober.'

Then came more strolling, including an Irish tour—during which Charles Kean was born at Waterford—a Scotch tour, and a weary tramp from Carlisle to York, where a despairing effort to get up an 'entertainment' having no success, seemed to overwhelm the wretched man. His wife, so badly rewarded for her faithful friendship, her heroic endurance, her constant sustenance, her bitter sufferings—his wife, the victim of his drunken ferocity in their obscurity, of his heartless infidelity in their better days, could no longer cheer him. Utter want oppressed them, and only charity saved them from starvation. 'On one occasion, a bitter curse upon his perverse destiny broke savagely from his lips. For a moment, the heroic courage with which Mrs Kean had borne up against the adverse tide abandoned her also, and sinking down upon her knees she looked upon her children, and offered a heartfelt prayer that God might see fit to terminate their sufferings and her own by death. The husband and father recovered himself, kissed away his wife's tears, and murmured: "I will go on; I will hope against hope." He did hope; he did try; he resumed his ramblings, and played at Weymouth Hamlet and harlequin, the latter with more unequivocal success than the former, and his magnificent Othello with no appreciation at all. A frightful failure at Guernsey, and a cruel attack upon him by the newspapers, then came quickly on the heels of his many misfortunes; but now the tide was about to turn. He came back to England, and at Dorchester fell in with his old friend, Dr Drury, who actively interested himself on the nearly despairing actor's behalf with the Drury Lane committee. But Dr Drury did not tell him what he was doing for him, and in the meantime Kean had accepted an engagement from Elliston to play melodramatic characters at the London Olympic for four pounds a week. The terrible necessities of his position drove him to the sacrifice of his cherished ambition at last, just at the moment when it was about to be realised. The complication of circumstances at this period of Kean's life is highly dramatic and touching. The sparkling cup was to come to his lips indeed, but dashed with what bitterness! Sights from the theatrical powers; disputes with Elliston and Arnold, solved only by abject entreaty, on Kean's part, dread, misgiving, and, worse than all, the death of his beloved child, Howard. In all the story of Edmund Kean's brilliant, lamentable life, there is nothing which engages one's sympathies for him like the love and grief he shewed for that child.

Things were at the worst, the promised arrangement seemed quite hopeless, when, on the 22d January 1814, Edmund Kean went out from Cecil Street with utter despair in his heart, meditating suicide. An acquaintance met him, and congratulated him upon a certain announcement, of which Kean was ignorant, and which ran thus:

THEATRE-ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

This Evening, *Illusion*

After which, *Two Strings to Your Bow*; to which will be added the new splendid Comic Pantomime, called

*Harlequin Harper, or a Jump from Japan.*

On Monday, *Othello*, with the Pantomime.

On Tuesday, *The Castle of Andalusia*, with the Pantomime.

On Wednesday, Mr KEAN, from the Theatre-royal Exeter, will make his first appearance at this Theatre, as Shylock, in the *Merchant of Venice*.

There was no heralding of this event, no puffing of the poor struggling actor, who had many enemies, and very few friends. He stood on his merits alone, that 'little man in the capes,' when on the 26th January 1814, Edmund Kean took the world by storm, and realised the fixed purpose, the unchanging ambition of his life. The story of that wonderful achievement, of that magnificent success, is the best known incident in stage-history. As a reminiscence, its sequel has most power now to please. Kean left the theatre, hardly heeding the obsequious congratulations of the green-room. 'In an almost frenzied ecstasy, he rushed through the wet to his humble lodging, sprang up the stairs, and threw open the door. His wife ran to meet him. No words were required; his radiant countenance told all; and they mingled together tears of true happiness. He told her of his proud achievement, and in a burst of exultation exclaimed: "Mary, you shall ride in your carriage; and Charley, my boy"—taking the child from the cradle, and kissing him—"you shall go to Eton; and"—his face changed, his joy passed away; he murmured in broken accents: "O that Howard had lived to see it! But he is better where he is."

In the career of the actor, from day to day, henceforth, there is growing prosperity, there is increasing brilliancy, wealth, fame, popularity; the admiration of the great, the learned, the rich, the powerful; the sincere tribute of the masses to his wondrous genius, evidenced in the flocking of enthusiastic crowds to the theatre. The erstwhile street Arab was an honoured guest in the noblest houses of the land; but his tastes did not lie in that direction. He hated 'that tinsel-covered mass of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness—polished society.' He erred on the opposite side to pride and ostentation, being rough in manner, and regardless of fashion in dress. The *Coal Hole Tavern*, Adelphi, had charms for him not found in the saloons of Holland House, where he had to encounter noblemen, of whom he said: 'They talk a great deal of what I don't understand—politics and other abstruse matters; but when it comes to plays, they talk such infernal nonsense.' He cordially liked Byron, not so much for his genius perhaps, as for other qualities of the noble poet which resembled his own, and atoned for the offence of his being a 'lord.'

It is pleasant to find that Kean did not forget

'Tid' in the days of his prosperity, and not surprising to learn that Nance Carey did not forget him. She extracted an annuity of fifty-one pounds from her son with much celerity, and set spurious relatives upon him continually with more or less success. He was kind, considerate, and generous to the friend of his wretched childhood, who was destined to nurse him in his last illness, and to mourn, doubtless as no other could have mourned, with sincerity over his grave. A vast quantity of criticism exists on the numerous characters played by Kean during his wonderful career, all interesting to read, though, of course, to us, discoursing of a great abstraction. The splendid and the base run parallel in this great and despicable man's character, and the reader cannot cease from wondering how the lower impulses of his nature gained such ascendancy over the grand inspirations, the marvellous insight, the exquisitely delicate perceptions of his intellect. His domestic history is so painful, that one wishes only a theatrical memoir of him had been attempted, for, though 'Mary' did ride in her carriage, and 'Charley' did go to Eton, Edmund Kean was a bad husband and father, and those who like to think, undisturbed, of the genius which interpreted, and which may be almost said to have enriched Shakspeare, will do well to take leave of him at the end of his ninth season, when the measure of his splendid achievements was full. The disgraceful episode of Mrs Cox, his separation from his injured wife, his utter abandonment to low excess, his eccentric, indeed absurd expedition to America, and adventures among the Hurons, a period of wildness only to be explained by the charitable hypothesis that he was—'a little m——, you know,' as Miss Flite puts it, are all of the most miserable complexion.

In January 1827, he reappeared at Drury Lane as Shylock, and Dr Doran thus graphically describes the occasion: 'A rush so fearful, an audience so packed, a reconciliation so complete, acting so faultless, a dramatic enjoyment so exquisite, I never remember. Nothing was heeded; indeed, the scenes were passed over until Shylock was to appear, and I have heard no such shout since as that which greeted him.' But that overwhelming 'welcome' from thousands of voices greeted, not, as the people and the critics thought, the incomparable player still in all his former vigour. The actors knew better; they saw the unnatural exertion, stimulated by the tremendous excitement, and knew that Kean was a failing man. That 7th January was an epoch in his life, and in the history of the stage; never again was such a performance witnessed; that was his real farewell to all his greatness. Inequality marked all he did afterwards; his strength failed, and, in plain English, he drank incessantly. He became moody and morose, wan, haggard, and, but for the piercing brilliancy of his eyes, unrecognisable. He became a prey to remorse, and in fact, though he had yet some years to live, and though there were occasional resuscitations of his former achievements, there is nothing more in his life on which one can dwell with any pleasure. The degrading vice whose slave he became has no mercy; everything must give way before it; truth, honour, and gratitude have no place where it rules. The ruin of Mr Grattan's play—his friend, true, steadfast, immovable—by Kean's coming on the stage incapably drunk to perform his part of it, is one

of the most revolting incidents in this melancholy and repulsive story. There was one more reconciliation, besides that with the public, for Edmund Kean—a reconciliation with his deeply injured wife. When life was closing for him, when he had sunk into a loathsome state of disease, when he had abused every gift of nature, and found that his punishment was not to be escaped, he wrote to his wife: 'DEAR MARY—Let us be no longer fools. Come home; forget and forgive. If I have erred, it was my head, not my heart, and most severely have I suffered for it. My future life shall be employed in contributing to your happiness; and you, I trust, will return that feeling by a total obliteration of the past. Your wild, but really affectionate husband,

EDMUND KEAN.'

It is difficult to perceive Mrs Kean's share in the 'folly;' but a fuller *amende* was not to be expected from such a man. Of course, she came home; and the meeting between the two was very affecting. But there remained very little more life for Edmund Kean. He died on the 15th May 1833, and then there was no 'home' for the widow. The cottage at Richmond and its contents were the property of Kean's creditors, for he who had made two hundred thousand pounds in England alone, died insolvent. Mrs Kean was handsomely provided for by her son; and Nance Carey survived Edmund Kean only eight days. What became of the immense sums he received, no one knows. He was very lavish of money always, and threw it away recklessly when he was drunk; but it takes a great deal of lavishness to waste the fortune which he wasted. He was splendidly generous; this is one of the traits it is delightful to remember and record; he never held his hand when any need or suffering was to be relieved, general or individual; he was a noble benefactor to his own profession; he gave large sums to the starving Irish; and the poor loved him. It has been said, eloquently and truly: 'In all romance, in all literature, there is nothing more melancholy, nothing more utterly tragic than the story of the career of Edmund Kean. So bitter and weary a struggle for a chance, so splendid and bewildering a success, so sad a waste of genius and of fortune, so lamentable a fall, can hardly be found among all the records of the follies, and sins, and misfortunes of genius.'

## A COUNTY FAMILY.

### CHAPTER XIX.—AN EXCELLENT MEMORY.

THE sight of Redcombe Manor, with its park and grounds, when William Blackburn's greedy eyes first lit upon them from afar, had, as we saw, somewhat quelled his insolent spirit. The prize had seemed to him too great to lie within reach of his itching palm, just as at first a stake of unwonted magnitude appears to the gambler too great a stroke of fortune to befall him—an unlikely thing to win. But, as in the gambler's case, now that the first great obstacle—his father's opposition and disfavour—had been smoothed away with such apparent ease, his hopes rose all the higher for his late depression; all seemed to lie within his grasp. The evidences of the wealth about him—which would surely at no distant date be his—inflated

him with vulgar pride. The absence of his father from the luncheon-table removed what little check might have been imposed upon his behaviour; and with every glass of wine he swallowed, he grew more confident and coarse. With a shiver at the heart, Lucy Waller contrasted this boastful ruffian with him who had once sat in his place, and dispensed hospitality at that same table in so different a fashion. Ellen herself regarded her uncle with little less aversion. He had grown positively rude to Mr Stanhope, and she felt genuinely grateful to the latter for the restraint which she well knew he was exercising upon himself for her sake and for that of her grandmother. His nature was fiery, and his wit keen enough to suggest such a retort as would have disconcerted even his half-drunken host, and covered him with shame; but he spared him. Mr Waller, whose age might have fitly entitled him to reprove, or at least repress, and who was very skillful in the management of men, kept an unusual silence, and even seemed, to judge by the gracious manner in which he received the newcomer's rough sallies, to encourage them. As for Mrs Blackburn, it is probable she scarcely caught the meaning of much that dropped from her son's lips; it was enough for her to know that he was in good spirits, and she rejoiced accordingly.

When the somewhat protracted meal was over, Stanhope asked permission to ring for his horse to be brought round; and when this was done, and the animal appeared before the terrace, he took his leave. The Squire had departed elsewhere, and the young man could not well help treating his son as his *locum tenens*; so, when he had bidden farewell to the rest, he held out his hand to William.

'I will see you to the gates,' returned the latter gruffly, taking no notice of this gesture; and he walked on in moody silence beside the horse and rider until they had turned the angle of the house, and were out of sight of the others. Then he stopped, and laid his hand upon the rein. 'Look you here, Mr Stanhope, or whatever your name is; I have something to say to you, once for all.'

For the second time that day, Herbert Stanhope's fingers involuntarily tightened their hold of the handle of his riding-whip. 'I never permit my bridle to be touched, sir,' said he quietly; 'that is also once for all.'

William Blackburn's swarthy face turned ashen pale, and he let go his hold; but his voice slackened not one whit in its imperious tone as he rejoined: 'Neither your horse nor you will be here again, I reckon, as you have been wont to be. I know you, sir, better than you think. Horses have done you much harm. You are not so rich, though you do live at Curlew Hall, but that a wife with money would be agreeable to you. Yes, yes. You have had nobody here until now to deal with but an old man already in his dotage, but henceforward it will be very different—do you understand? Then, listen to this: I do not choose my niece to be married at present—nor to you at all.'

'Indeed, sir,' returned Stanhope coolly. 'Have you any other commands to communicate?—your wish, as you may easily imagine, will always be my law.'

His contemptuous smile, even more than his



mocking words, stung the other to frenzy; but repartee was not his strong point.

'You are vastly clever, Mr Stanhope, but you will find you have met your match—another sort of match than that you expected here.'

'I am not clever, Mr William Blackburn, but I have a most excellent memory. I may say, indeed, as is said of the royal family, that I never forget a face that I have once seen, and I have seen yours before to-day.'

'Never you mind that,' rejoined the other doggedly, but not without a change of colour; 'you will henceforth not see it very often, at least at Redcombe Manor.'

'I am not so sure of that, my good friend,' said Stanhope, taking out of his pocket a small book, and referring to it with much deliberation. 'Let me see: yes, it was in the same year that *Donnybrook* won the Derby, when I was quite a lad, that I first saw you—at Chester.'

'I never was at Chester in my life.'

'That's strange; for if you never were, it was your twin-brother whom I saw brought up before the magistrates for horse-poisoning. You were bribed to nobble the *Khan* for the Chester Cup. I sat on the bench with my father, and remember the case perfectly well. You were in with Richardson and that lot, but they could only bring the thing home to you. Instead of using arsenic, you tried (not from motives of humanity, I'll be sworn) some corrosive sublimate, which you put in his oats, and so only sickened the horse. There was another charge against you for cutting the sinews of some horse that was entered for another race—but that fell through. But I well remember—for I was interested in the case, and watched it after you were committed for trial, you got five years—and they are not over yet, Mr William Roberts!'

'It's a lie!' gasped the unhappy wretch through his white lips.

'That is—of course—what it occurs to a fellow—of your stamp—to say,' observed the other, carefully lighting a cigar. 'You have the misfortune to be not only a vile knave, but a gross fool. You don't even know when you are beat, you stupid cur!'

The relics of the other's Dutch courage oozed away to the last dregs as he replied, with his evil face cast down, and his heel denting the soft gravel savagely: 'What, in the Fiend's name, is it you want of me?'

'There, now, that's common sense, my man, and the nearest approach to reason which I have yet seen in you. What do I want as the price of my silence?—for not saying what I know about William Blackburn, alias Roberts, the man that poisoned the horse at Chester? Well, of course, I shall want lots of things.'

'Then, you shall not have them!' exclaimed the ruffian passionately. 'Do you suppose I'm going to put myself in your vice, to be screwed up as tight as you please, all my life long? No; do your worst. Supposing all you say is true (and I don't say it is—mind that), what harm can you do to me? Even, according to your own shewing, if I have done anything amiss, it's paid for—ain't it?'

'Well, not just yet: you had five years, you know, and they are not quite over; you must be out on ticket-of-leave, and are therefore still under the supervision of the police. You wince at that;

but really you ought to feel obliged to the foolish clemency of the law, which permits a gentleman of your class and character to be at large a single day before the date of his discharge. You have not, perhaps, studied the discussion upon this matter in your late retirement, but I assure you that the papers have been full of it. How you must have greened the chaplain, and how easy he must have been to "green!" However, you certainly have, as you were about to say, been punished, and may consider yourself a free man. The law has been avenged, but not society. We can't admit horse-poisoners into county circles, my good sir; we can't allow them to marry into county families, my excellent friend—that is to say, if the crime is known. On the other hand, so long as the secret is preserved, they may do almost anything they please. Having brought the argument thus far, your sagacity is surely sufficient to permit of your drawing the deduction, that my silence must at any price be secured.'

The force of contempt and bitterness could no farther go than in the young man's air and tone; but the fact was, that he not only despised the wretch before him, but also himself, for being under the necessity of making terms with such a creature. It is easy enough for a fool to be indignant with the vices to which he is not inclined, and to be blind to his own shortcomings; but Herbert Stanhope was no fool, and could not play the hypocrite with his own conscience. No one knew better than himself how vile was the part that he had undertaken to play in the house of his friend and neighbour; and the few words that William Blackburn had remarked upon it had secretly stung him far more keenly than all his sarcasms had affected the other. He had been, from the nature of his pursuit, acquainted with many a scoundrel, and had often had a common interest with them; but he had hitherto contrived, in that respect, to keep his turf experiences and his own private life distinct and apart from one another. At that very moment, he was justly liable to disgrace and outlawry among a certain set of persons with whom he had chosen to cast in his lot. He did not spare himself at all in the view he took of that matter, but his ways outside the betting ring had been always those of a gentleman. For the first time, he now found himself, in what might be called his Home relations, about to become hand and glove with a villain. If William Blackburn's crime had not been one connected with the calling in which he had himself gone so far astray, he would not have been so bitter against him; but we are as fanciful in our moral as we are in our physical disease, and he loathed him because he appeared to mirror some distorted and odious image of himself. 'Well, your answer, sir?' exclaimed he harshly, as the other continued his excavation in the gravel without a nod. 'Or, shall I ride back and tell your father that I must decline the invitation he has given me to pass the next few days at the Manor? since, though I am sorry to lose his friendship, I cannot permit myself to share the same roof with a felon.'

'No, no,' said the other, with an affectation of frankness; 'you can come as you like, of course. There is no need for us two to quarrel. You have only to hold your tongue, and you will have my good word with Ellen. The old man will cut up well, and there will be plenty for her as well as

for me. I am sorry I was so rough with you—there, a gentleman can't say more than that. Henceforth, we'll work together; that's a bargain, and here's my hand upon it.'

'There's no necessity for that,' rejoined Stanhope coldly. 'And perhaps it will be as well, since you shewed such temper just now upon the terrace, that we should not appear in public on the best of terms with one another. You can grunt "How do you do?" instead of shaking hands, I daresay. I shall be here to-morrow for a day or two. Good-bye.' And with a careless nod, Stanhope slowly rode away along the avenue, without once turning his head. Had he done so, he would have seen his late companion still standing on the same spot, and watching him with wolfish eyes.

'If I only had him in the well-hole at Formosa,' muttered he through his clenched teeth, 'and could watch from above the rising tide, and see him climb, and cling, and slowly drown; or, better still, if he could scramble near the top, and think he should be saved, and come within my reach, so that I might make him lose his hold—then, and not till then, should he and I be quits.'

#### CHAPTER XX.—THRUST AND PARRY.

As Stanhope passed through the lodge gate, he beheld, to his surprise, and not with pleasure—for he was by no means inclined just then for company—Mr Waller standing on the turf by the roadside, and evidently waiting for him. He had come from the terrace by a shorter way than through the avenue, and would have intercepted him in any case; but not a little time had been taken up by the parley with William Blackburn, and the look with which the ex-M.P. received him was pregnant with curious inquiry. 'What on earth have you been doing, Stanhope? I began to get quite alarmed, not indeed upon your account, but upon that of our friend in the black dittoes. Have you been horse-whipping that wretched cub, or what? He was certainly very rude to you.'

'As to that, he was rude to everybody; and upon my life, Waller—though, under the circumstances, it was not for me to interfere—if I had been a relative of any lady at table, I should have felt it my duty, at all hazards, to have put a stop to it.'

'Well, the fact is it was a deuced delicate business, my good fellow. In the first place, the man was drunk, and remonstrance is not only thrown away in such a case, but sometimes makes matters much worse. He might have got angry and "said things," you know, before the women; then, again, if there had been a row, his father must have heard of it, and it would have ruined the poor devil altogether. They're not the best of friends, you see, as it is, and one would not have liked to have widened the breach, would one? It is about this very matter that I want to have a few words with you. I think we should give a chance to this just returned prodigal. If he is a beggar on horseback, we ought not to let him ride to the denuce.'

'Why not?' asked Stanhope coldly, looking hard in the other's face. 'I have been riding in that direction myself these five years, and you have never attempted to stop me.'

'But you have not ridden so fast as this man, my good sir,' added Mr Waller smiling, 'although I daresay you have outrun the constable. Besides, you are not the sort of man to take the advice of a neighbour, however well meaning it might be.'

'Then you think that gentleman yonder'—and Stanhope pointed contemptuously over his shoulder with his whip—'is one more likely to listen to reason?'

'No; not exactly that: he would not be easily led; but I think he might be *driven*, that is, if one knew, as you do, what sort of goad was efficacious.'

'I know! How can I possibly know?'

'My dear Stanhope, why should you attempt to deceive me? If you have not been horse-whipping this fellow—which I confess I thought you had, by the expression of your face—you have certainly got the better of him in some way or another. How does a man obtain a mastery over a fellow-creature wilder and more savage than himself?—By a stick. You have not employed a material one; you must therefore have used a moral one. Mr William Blackburn is not a person to have been swayed by mere eloquence—for I have tried that with him myself—it is plain to me, therefore, that you have made him afraid of you. You are his Rarey—the tamer of this wild animal; and to become a Rarey, you must possess a secret.'

'My dear Mr Waller,' returned Stanhope with an amused air, 'your logic is most admirable, and I am quite sorry to think that you have only a poor country-gentleman like me to listen to it. I have never doubted your sagacity, nor has anybody in these parts ever ventured to do so: at the same time, I have heard a whisper, now and then, which is not quite so favourable to your disinterestedness. May I inquire—in case, that is, you intend to ask me any more questions—how this matter can possibly affect you? Forgive me if I cannot easily believe that the welfare of Mr William Blackburn is your sole consideration.'

'My dear young friend,' said Mr Waller blandly, 'I am sorry that at your time of life you should be so suspicious; a circumstance, however, which (as foreign to the generosity of your character) I attribute to your connection with the turf. I cannot help what evil tongues may say of me; though I am sorry their slanders have entered ears which I had hoped were friendly to me. I solemnly assure you I have no underhand motive in this affair whatsoever. I have no great interest in the young man, perhaps, although at the same time we should remember he has been severely tried.'

An irrepressible smile flitted across Stanhope's face.

'Gad! perhaps he *has* been tried!' thought Mr Waller.

'You and I,' continued the ex-M.P., 'have had no experience of poverty, and of the temptations to which it is exposed. We were brought up tenderly, and taken care of until we could take care of ourselves. This man, upon the contrary, has had a hard life of it from the cradle. I am no humanity-monger, as you well know, but I think we should look with charity upon such cases. I give you my word of honour that I honestly believe there may be good in this rough fellow; that if he only has a fair chance he may still turn out a respectable member of society; and it is my fixed intention to do my best to make him so.'

'Upon my life, I begin to think Waller is in earnest,' thought the young man; 'but then, he is such a very clever fellow.'

'And yet, my dear Stanhope, as I have confessed, my interest in this unhappy person is very small as compared with what I feel for his parents.'

They are both, as we know, kind and hospitable folks. Anthony Blackburn comes of as good a stock as yourself—one which we all respect—and his wife is in her way an excellent creature. If this son of theirs goes to the dogs, his father will die of vexation (from the shame of it), and his mother of a broken heart: and again, let me ask you, by the way, is not the very circumstance of her devotion to him a proof that there is some good in the man? The Squire, it is true, has no such affection for him, but the main point is that the happiness of both of them is, for whatever reason, equally bound up in his future. His disgrace would destroy them, as well as do grievous harm to that charming young lady, their grand-daughter. You must surely go with me thus far, my dear young friend?

Stanhope nodded with a grave smile.

'Well, these excellent people have been good enough to repose some confidence in me.'

'Now he is going to put a little water in the pump,' mused the other, 'in order that he may coax out of it whole bucketsful.'

'They have reposed no confidence in me,' observed Stanhope drily.

'No; but you have obtained some information from the fountain-head: let us put our two sums together, and add them up. It fell to me, as you know, to break the news just now of this William Blackburn's arrival to his father. He was terribly put out by it. I never saw a man more moved, that is, with anger. His behaviour was such that he thought it right (in explanation of it) to acquaint me with the cause of his displeasure. It appears that this lady, who has so lately died, was a person whom Mr Blackburn strongly disapproved of, as respected her position in life, and that his son married her contrary to the Squire's wishes.'

'But now that she is dead, my good sir, I see no reason for a continuance of this ill feeling between father and son, and nevertheless it still exists.'

'What excellent sense you have, my dear Stanhope! It was only because I knew you to have so great a faculty of observation, that I made up my mind to tell you this much—which I should otherwise have certainly treated as a confidential communication. Stanhope will be sure, said I, to find out for himself that this marriage with "Bess" was a *mésalliance*. I can do no harm by the revelation; and with this fact to go upon, we may, as common friends of the family, take counsel for their benefit; and here we are laying our heads together accordingly. Now, since besides this marriage, there must have been something else to make the old man so bitter against his only son, the question is: What was it?

And the ex-M.P. smiled good-humouredly, and patted the mane of his friend's horse, as though he would have elicited the views of that sagacious animal, as well as those of his rider, upon the matter in hand.

'You, of course, Stanhope know all about it.'

The suddenness of the inquiry, accompanied by the rapid looking up of the speaker into the young man's face, disconcerted him so, that if he had contemplated any deception, it would have been put to flight; but he had entertained no such design.

'Yes, I do,' said he frankly; 'at the same time, Mr Waller, you must excuse me, if I claim for myself the same privilege which you confess you

would have exercised. You say you would have considered it a breach of confidence to tell me what you have just communicated, had it not been within my own power to guess it. Now, you, on your part, have not guessed what it is which has caused Mr Blackburn and his son to be on such bad terms with one another; and notwithstanding my high opinion of your sagacity, I will add that I do not think it likely you *will* guess it. This is surely a sufficient reason for my silence: but besides, the matter in question was not revealed to me in tacit confidence only; I have passed my word to keep it as a secret. Under these circumstances, I need not, I am sure, say to Mr Waller: "Do not press me to break my word." And Stanhope gathered up the reins from his horse's neck.

'One moment, one single moment,' exclaimed the ex-M.P., in accents which, though intended to be cheerful, could not quite disguise his chagrin. 'You may be sure I shall not ask you to do wrong. But—only to relieve my mind—just tell me this,' he looked furtively round and sank his voice to a whisper: 'I know this unfortunate man has been in sad straits, but—he never *stole* anything, did he?'

'What a horrible idea!' ejaculated Stanhope. 'He certainly did *not*. If such an assurance be any satisfaction to you, you are very welcome to it.—And now, good-day.'

'Then it must have been poaching,' whispered the other earnestly. 'I am perfectly convinced that it was poach.'

But Stanhope touched his horse with his heel, and with a good-natured 'No, no, Mr Waller, that won't do,' trotted away without another word.

'A very obstinate young man,' murmured his discomfited inquirer; 'and a secretive young man—which is a bad sign. I'll lay my life, however, it was poaching. How sharp the fellow took me up when I asked him, on the hill yonder, if he had not been "in trouble" lately; and again, did I not see Stanhope smile when I talked of the man's having been "severely tried." I daresay he was punished severely. The game-laws are most oppressive, and a disgrace to the country, as I always intended to say in the House of Commons. I'll write a pamphlet against them, and give it to William Blackburn to read; then I shall easily find out the truth. Though it was certainly poaching. Upon my life, I am afraid he has been in jail. That's what comes of "Justice's justice." Poor fellow! Why, I know lots of people who poach habitually, but then they're rich men; which is very different. From what the Squire said, it was evidently quite an early peccadillo; I daresay merely a boyish folly, which it was cruel in the law to so chastise, and still more cruel in his father to resent so long and bitterly. Yes, yes; it was a mere frolic, I feel sure.'

Mr Waller's face wore its usual smile, as he re-entered the avenue, in the middle of which it, however, grew once more serious, as he stopped and muttered to himself: 'Eh gad, I hope he did not kill a keeper, though!' Then, adding briskly: 'Let us hope he only shot him in the legs,' he hummed an air, not very correctly, from the last new opera, and hurried gaily on.

In the croquet-ground were Ellen and Lucy with their mallets; they were by no means pursuing the game with the usual ardour of young

ladies, but rather made it serve as a cover to conversation. Here follows the substance of their talk since luncheon.

'Well, and what do you think of him, Ellen?'

'My dear Lucy, what a question! You know it is not the first time that I have seen him.'

'That is scarcely an answer.—It is my green ball to play, is it not?—You must confess, at all events' (thud), 'that he did his best to make himself agreeable.'

Ellen sighed, and missed a hoop.

'You are thinking of something else, my dear, or you would not play so badly,' remarked Lucy, holding up her finger reproachfully. 'I shall think it my duty to tell Mr Denton, I shall, indeed. Supposing even that meeting on the moor was accidental'—

'What do you mean, Lucy?—I thought you were speaking of my uncle.'

'Indeed, I was not' (tight croquet, and ball sent to the confines of the grounds); 'I am talking of Mr Stanhope. You are aware, I suppose, that he was making love to you!'

'He certainly was not, my dear; I deny that there was even the appearance of it—but it so happens—in fact, he knows all about me and John.'

'Ah!—You have one more ring to go through with that blue.—Then all I can say is, I don't understand it. You know, I suppose, that he has the reputation of being on the look-out for a fortune; and that his estate is much embarrassed!'

'I have heard that he is dissipated and extravagant.'

'I don't know about dissipated, though he is doubtless extravagant. People are always apt to believe the worst.'

'But I thought he spent all his time on race-courses.'

'Did you?—Come, I've hit that green at last' (viciously). 'Not all his time, surely, because there are times in the year when there are no races.'

'I'm sure I don't wish to be hard upon him, Lucy; though I thought you were very severe with him on the moor, talking about his debts and his poverty.'

'It was evident that you sympathised with him, my dear; and it is a sort of sympathy which is very dangerous. As to him, I saw at once that he had made up his mind to have your forty thousand pounds down—or whatever it is. He is come down here to get it, that's certain.'

'My dear Lucy, how can you say such things? I have told you the truth; he is perfectly well aware of my engagement.'

'And how came Mr Herbert Stanhope to be "perfectly aware" of such a delicate circumstance? But perhaps that is a secret?'

'No, indeed; he has been very intimate here—with papa more so than any other neighbour; and—and they have been used to talk quite confidentially.'

'Oh, I thought your grandpapa did not know that you were engaged!'

'My dear Lucy, what is the matter with you? You know, as well as I do, that my heart is in John's safe keeping. But, even supposing it were otherwise, nothing would ever induce me to marry any man whose pursuit was racing.'

'Well, I never heard that Mr Stanhope was a blackleg; although I have heard all sorts of

malignant things about him. I have known him from my childhood, and he's not, I assure you, such a wretch as you seem to think him.'

'A wretch! Lucy? Indeed, I think nothing of the sort. But with respect to racing—it is a thing of which I confess I have a great horror.'

'How wicked you must think me, then, my dear,' laughed Lucy, 'for I once made a little book on the Derby myself, stood to win eighteen pair of gloves (all with double buttons); and I don't think it very much demoralised me.'

'It does some people,' returned Ellen gravely.

Lucy took her green ball with infinite pains, and hitting fair (which was rather unusual with her) through three hoops before she spoke again:

'Is your uncle William fond of race-courses, Ellen?'

'I think so; at least he used to be so, long ago.'

'Have you any reason to believe that he and Mr Stanhope ever met before, Ellen?'

'None whatever. Why do you ask the question?'

'Because, at luncheon, I noticed Mr Stanhope looking at your uncle more than once in a sort of puzzled manner, as though he were trying to recollect something about him. It may, however, have been only my fancy.—Is not that somebody calling "Lucy!" Yes, it is papa's voice upon the terrace. Dear, dear! just as I was close to the post, and almost 'a Rover.' I daresay he wants me to write something for him before the post leaves; if not, I will be back directly, my dear.'

And off she ran. She did not come back, and Ellen continued to knock the balls about and muse.

'What could have been the matter with Lucy, at first so testy and almost cross, and then again in such high good humour? What must she think—what must everybody think of Uncle William and his behaviour? And yet it was not that which had put Lucy out, but something, as it would seem, in her own (Ellen's) conduct. What had she done to annoy her? Did Lucy guess at what had already happened between Mr Stanhope and herself? If so, Lucy must be aware that any attentions he might now pay her must be simply those of respectful friendship. If not, cognizant as she was of her engagement to John, that knowledge should have been sufficient to acquit Ellen in her friend's eyes of any charge of encouraging this man's addresses. But indeed, why should Lucy concern herself about the matter at all? and, above all, why behave so inconsistently with respect to Mr Stanhope? She had abused him to his face in a manner that had been quite embarrassing to her (Ellen); and now she not only refused to hear a word against him, but even suggested imaginary attacks upon his character, for the mere pleasure of controverting them. Then, how she must have watched him at luncheon, to get that idea into her head about him and Uncle William having met before! Was it possible—But no; while playing in the very croquet-ground that had been laid out to please her by dead Richard Blackburn, and in a spot so pregnant with tender memories, it could surely not be possible, and yet it was very strange.'



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